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October 19, 1976

MEMO TO FILE:

Re: United States Steel Corp.
Desert Mound and
Mountain Lion Iron Pits
Sec. 2, 19, 30, T. 36 S., R. 13 W.
Iron County, Utah

ACT-021-003

Ron Daniels and Brian Buck inspected this open pit iron mining operation in the Iron Springs Mining District northwest of Cedar City on October 14, 1976. They were met at the Desert Mound office by Mr. John Quinn of the U.S. Steel Lander Wyoming office, Mr. Edward Hahne and Mr. Norman Heaton of the Desert Mound office.

The mines in this district are developed in replacement magnetite and hematite deposits which are found in the Homestake Limestone Member of the Jurassic Carmel Formation. This mining district contains many mines and has a history dating back to 1849. The Desert Mound area was first worked in 1925 and the U.S. Steel pit was opened in 1943 to supply the Geneva Steel Mill. This pit was abandoned in 1972 although the support facilities are still used in conjunction with the Mountain Lion Pit which is located on Iron Mountain 7 miles to the southwest. The Mountain Lion Pit, dumps, and Desert Mound support facilities are the existing operation covered under the Act.

The Mountain Lion Pit is currently marginally active and U.S. Steel is planning on opening another pit just northeast of the existing one. The Division's concerns with the company's reclamation plan on this total operation were:

1. U.S. Steel declared no past or future land use for the pit and dump areas.
2. No measure would be used to decrease the hazard posed by the steep pit walls other than erecting a wire fence.
3. The planned revegetation program was to, "let nature take its course in this rocky, remote, arid area."
4. There was no soil in the area to be disturbed by new activity, perhaps this was a reason for no reclamation.

The field inspection shed some light on the above concern in the following manner:

1. The area to be disturbed did have a residual soil veneer of varying thickness which supported a community of juniper, pinyon pine, and assorted brush species.

2. This area does have a present wildlife habitat use as evidenced by fresh deer sign. The area immediately northeast of the site is used to graze cattle.
3. When nature is allowed to revegetate the disturbed areas, russian thistle, halogeten, and rabbitbrush, in that order, are the dominant species. In contrast, Utah International has embarked on a comprehensive and successful revegetation program on the low ground to the northeast of Iron Mountain. This program has developed a cover of intermediate and crested wheatgrass along with rabbitbrush which has minimized the incursion of the thistle and halogeten.

On the point of minimizing the hazard of the near verticle pit walls, the company proposed constructing 5' to 6' high piles of rock completely around the pit perimeters in addition to a wire fence where possible. This action should be satisfactory if the pile or 'rick' was made of rock in such a manner as to be permanent and relatively impassible to motor vehicles.

The native vegetation observed in the area was alkalai sacaton, Indian ricegrass, galleta grass, rabbitbrush, cheatgrass, various annuals, pinyon pine, juniper, bitterbrush, cliffrose, and Utah serviceberry.

The Division will be suggesting a revegetation test plot program to help U.S. Steel develope a viable reclamation plan which will provide for future use of the dump and support facilities areas.

DIVISION OF OIL, GAS, AND MINING

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BWB/lm